

**AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS**

A complete listing of the claims is as follows:

Claim 1. (*Currently Amended*) An article of footwear comprising:

a flexible upper;

a tightening arrangement provided on the upper to tighten the foot within the upper;

~~the upper comprising~~ a molded heel stiffener having a first lateral wall extending along a first lateral side of the upper, a rear wall extending along a rear of the upper, and a second lateral wall extending along a second lateral side of the upper, said heel stiffener having at least one recess on each of said first and lateral walls;

a strap affixed upon said heel stiffener within said recesses in said first and lateral walls of said heel stiffener and extending around the rear of the upper;

an outer sole.

Claim 2. (*Currently Amended*) An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein:

said heel stiffener comprises ~~a rear wall and~~ a base extending substantially forwardly from said rear wall up to an area of a front limit of a plantar arch of a wearer.

Claim 3. (*Currently Amended*) An article of footwear according to claim 2, wherein:

~~said heel stiffener comprises two lateral~~ walls of said heel stiffener are edges adapted to protect rear lateral edges portions of said first and second lateral sides of the upper.

Claim 4. (*Currently Amended*) An article of footwear according to claim 3, wherein:

said heel stiffener comprises a pivoting notch ~~recess~~ at a junction of said first lateral wall edges and said rear wall and a pivoting notch at a junction of said second lateral wall and said rear wall, said notches being spaced above the outer sole.

Claim 5. (*Currently Amended*). An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein:  
said heel stiffener includes at least one housing housings for positioning and adhesively securing at least a rear portion of one strap or said outer sole.

Claim 6. (*Original*) An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein:  
said heel stiffener is made of rubber.

Claim 7. (*Original*) An article of footwear according to claim 1, wherein:  
said outer sole comprises two portions with different thicknesses.

Claim 8. (*Currently Amended*) A method for assembling an the article of footwear of claim 1, said method comprising:  
assembling the upper to an insole;  
pressing and cementing to the upper a the molded heel stiffener;  
pressing and cementing to the front of the upper a front protective strip;  
pressing and cementing to the rear of the upper a the strap overlapping the heel stiffener and the front protective strip,  
pressing and cementing the outer sole.

Claim 9. (*New*) An article of footwear according to claim 7, wherein:  
a front portion of the sole has a thickness greater than a thickness of a rear portion of the sole.

Claim 10. (*New*) An article of footwear according to claim 9, wherein:  
the heel stiffener further comprises a base extending between lower portions of the first and second lateral walls, the rear portion of the sole extending beneath the base of the heel stiffener.

Claim 11. (*New*) An article of footwear according to claim 9, wherein:  
the thickness of the front portion of the sole is at least twice the thickness of the rear portion of the sole.

Claim 12. (*New*) An article of footwear according to claim 11, wherein:  
the thickness of the rear portion of the sole is 2 millimeters.

Claim 13. (*New*) An article of footwear according to claim 1, further comprising:  
a front protective strip affixed to a lower portion of the upper, the front protective strip having a pair of arms extending rearwardly along the first and second lateral sides of the upper;  
each of the pair of arms of the front protective strip is overlapped by respective portions of the strap on said first and second lateral sides of the upper.

Claim 14. (*New*) An article of footwear comprising:  
a flexible upper;  
a tightening arrangement provided on the upper to tighten the foot within the upper;  
a molded heel stiffener having a first lateral wall extending along a first lateral side of the upper, a rear wall extending along a rear of the upper, and a second wall extending along a second lateral side of the upper, and a base extending forwardly from the rear wall and between said first and second walls;  
an outer sole having a first portion extending at least beneath the base of the heel stiffener and a second portion extending forwardly from said first portion, said second portion of said outer sole having a greater thickness than a thickness of said first portion.

Claim 15. (*New*) An article of footwear according to claim 14, wherein:  
the thickness of the second portion of the outer sole is at least twice the thickness of the first portion of the sole.

Claim 16. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 15, wherein:  
the thickness of the first portion of the outer sole is 2 millimeters.

Claim 17. (New) An article of footwear comprising:  
a flexible upper;  
a tightening arrangement provided on the upper to tighten the foot within the upper;  
a molded heel stiffener having a first lateral wall extending along a first lateral side of the upper, a rear wall extending along a rear of the upper, and a second wall extending along a second lateral side of the upper, and a base extending forwardly from the rear wall and between said first and second walls;  
the first lateral wall of the heel stiffener having a rearwardly extending upper edge, the second lateral wall of the heel stiffener having a rearwardly extending upper edge, and a respective notch connecting the upper edges of the first and second lateral walls of the heel stiffeners with the rear wall of the heel stiffener, said notches facilitating a pivoting of the rear wall of the heel stiffener relative to the first and second lateral walls;  
an outer sole extending beneath the first and second lateral walls, said outer sole having an upper edge spaced below said notches.

Claim 18. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 17, further comprising:  
a strap extending around a rear of the upper, said strap having a pair of arms extending forwardly and downwardly, said pair of arms overlapping onto, and being adhered to, respective forward ends of the first and second lateral walls of the heel stiffener.

Claim 19. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 18, wherein:  
the pair of arms are affixed to the rear of the upper and the first and second lateral walls of the heel stiffener to apply a forward tension on the rear of the upper.

Claim 20. (*New*) An article of footwear according to claim 19, wherein:

the base of the heel stiffener and the rear wall of the stiffener include recesses, a rear of said outer sole being affixed to said heel stiffener in said recesses.